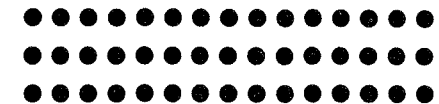
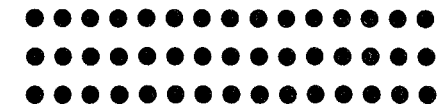


PART THREE



TEACHING ASSISTANTS AND STUDENTS

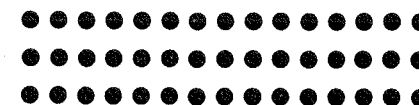


Students are responsible for a large portion of the attention given to academic governance, curriculum reform, and other aspects of the university crisis. Without the dramatic growth of student activism in the early sixties, many universities would have remained silent and would clearly not have begun to think seriously of academic reform. This is not to say that the student move-

ment has taken an active role in academic reform because for the most part political goals or a wide-ranging dissatisfaction with the "system" has been at the root of the movement. Nevertheless, students have caused a growth in the trend toward academic reform and have stimulated no small part of the over-all academic crisis. Wisconsin, as Shlomo Swirsky points out in his chapter, has a long tradition of student activism and has been one of the most militant campuses. As a barometer of student activism, it is an especially good example of a widespread phenomenon.

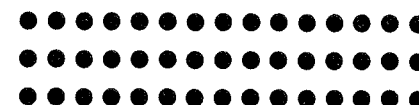
Chapters in this part deal with a number of aspects of student activism which have received only limited attention elsewhere. Problems of graduate students are considered in the chapter by Philip Altbach. Steven Zorn discusses the history and development of the Teaching Assistants Association, one of the first unions of graduate teaching assistants. The activism of graduate students at Wisconsin is an important aspect of what may well be a growing development. Judith Lyons and Morgan Lyons discuss the response of students to crisis and point out that substantial polarization often takes place during confrontations on campus. Moderate students, they point out, often side with militants when the university overtly represses demonstrations or other protest activities. Again, Wisconsin provides a particularly good example of the response to confrontation politics since it has been subjected both to militant tactics by student activists and to the presence of national guard troops in large numbers on a number of occasions. Finally, Robert Laufer and Sheila McVey discuss the question of generational conflict and the differences among student generations on campus. Their analysis points out that campus events have very substantially shaped the outlooks and socialization of the students involved in them. In this sense, campus violence has tended to radicalize students in conjunction with national and international events.

CHAPTER 14



GRADUATE STUDENTS

Philip G. Altbach



Among the many forces involved in the changing situation of American higher education, the graduate student has been one of the least considered. Yet graduate students are deeply involved in the academic enterprise—traditionally as teachers of undergraduates (in the larger universities at least), as apprentice scholars, and as the source of prestige for many universities. They have also played an active role in recent changes. Graduate student unions have been organized on a number of campuses, and graduate students have at times been involved in political agitation.

This chapter describes the situation of graduate students in large American universities. The University of Wisconsin's Madison campus is the touchstone for this commentary both because of my personal knowledge of it and because this institution is rather typical of the twenty or so universities which produce a large proportion of doctorates. It is my purpose also to place the graduate student's situation in the context of American higher education, to stimulate thought on means of improving the lot of these students, and to focus attention on an increasingly important and volatile element of the American university.

If the demonstrably unenviable situations of many graduate students did not necessitate this chapter, then the new militancy and ar-

ticulateness of graduate students and their centrality to the crisis of the university would demand it. For one thing, the graduate students on the Madison campus constitute an important element of the student community. The Teaching Assistants Association (TAA), now functioning for more than two years, has focused attention on graduate students and has in many respects made changes in their traditional role on the campus. Graduate students have also been organizing at the department level and have been seeking a role in academic policy making. Some academic departments at Wisconsin and other universities have included them in the decision-making processes. An even larger number of departments have recognized their associations on an advisory basis.

Graduate students are important to the university for a number of reasons. From their ranks come virtually all academic staff members, a large proportion of research workers in industry, government, and the universities, and many secondary school administrators and teachers. In many large universities—particularly state-run institutions—graduate students do a substantial share of the undergraduate teaching. At Wisconsin, for example, teaching assistants perform 56 per cent of all undergraduate instruction and, in the College of Letters and Sciences, probably a higher proportion. Teaching assistants provide 68 per cent of freshman and sophomore instruction. Graduate students also provide the research manpower without which many university projects could not function.

American universities are marked by their inability or unwillingness to deal with key problems until they are of crisis proportions, and the University of Wisconsin is no exception to this rule. In response to the crisis generated by student protest, countless studies of undergraduate attitudes were published, libraries of books appeared on reform of the curriculum, and a score of experimental colleges were begun at the undergraduate level. As long as no one was concerned about defense-related research projects on campus, they were allowed to continue without question. Students were not added to various academic committees until the 1964 Berkeley student revolt. At Wisconsin, it took the Dow crises and the Wisconsin Student Association's "student power" bill to push the institution toward granting student participation in academic governance. It seems that graduate students, too, will no longer remain silent, and that therefore they will be of growing importance to university policy makers.

While graduate students are part of what has been called the crisis of the American university, their situation also reflects broader academic problems. The golden age of American higher education, in terms of funds and promising job opportunities, seems to be at an end. The employment situation for new Ph.D.s is indeed serious and places great

stress on graduate students. This crisis may in the long run have implications for political activism and general discontent. At the same time, financial conditions on the campus are growing more difficult. Student financial aids have been cut—at Wisconsin the federally supported work-study program was cut by 45 per cent in 1969–1970—and at the same time tuition costs continue to rise. There are fewer fellowships and it is more difficult to obtain funds for doctoral research. The university is caught in a serious financial squeeze which affects students directly and immediately. It is painful enough for a professor to have his research budget cut or to receive a lower than expected salary increase. It is quite another matter for a graduate student to lose his sole means of livelihood.

The national economic situation is of critical importance, but there are many stresses inherent in the academic setting itself. For the sake of dramatic impact, a short listing of those conditions of graduate student life which cause friction, disaffection, and general unhappiness is included here. The list is by no means exhaustive, nor is it based on any scientific sampling of student opinion. (1) Graduate students are adults in every sense of the term but are often treated like children by their universities. (2) Graduate students are often woefully exploited by individual professors, departments, or universities in terms of inadequate remuneration for work performed, work loads which almost preclude prompt completion of academic work, or occasional plagiarism of original work by senior professors. (3) Graduate students are the subjects of often arbitrary treatment by professors, departments, or institutions and have few means of resisting such treatment. (4) Graduate students are often almost totally dependent on their professors or departments for livelihood, for certification as scholars, and possibly for future academic positions. (5) The role of a graduate student as a teaching or research colleague with a senior professor is often ambivalent.

This situation of substantial powerlessness should not obscure a number of positive factors associated with graduate student life. A strong subculture often provides support. Many graduate students do have the leisure to pursue their studies or their intellectual interests without much interference. And for some, graduate student existence forestalls entry into the hard, cruel worlds of academe or industry. Conditions differ greatly from institution to institution as well, and in some universities graduate students are substantially better off than in others.

Graduate students are in the university to earn advanced degrees; their other roles are, or should be, subsidiary to this primary task. Yet, a great deal of time and attention is taken up with such activities as part-time work and department politics. The graduate student is involved in taking courses and seminars, sitting for examinations, writing research

papers, and fulfilling the other obligations of his department. He is, after passing required preliminary examinations, finally involved in writing a doctoral dissertation. The choice of a dissertation advisor and topic is a particularly important one for arts and sciences students, many of whom will be heading for academic careers. The advisor is often crucial in securing a first academic job and of course in seeing the student through the completion of his doctorate.

There is a curious dichotomy in graduate student academic life. Grades count for fellowships and prizes as well as for the completion of the academic program. Letters of recommendation are important, too, and it is often crucial to impress particular professors for one reason or another. At the same time, professors often insist that they want to be friendly and low-pressured with their students. There is an effort to separate undergraduate from graduate study by insisting on closer and more informal relations with graduate students, although in many large graduate departments this is more myth than reality. But even this familiarity, where it exists, is often difficult for the student, since evaluation is taking place all the time in the American academic system, and the student is pitted against his peers in his department and ultimately in the job market.

The feeling of powerlessness, a constant in the graduate student syndrome, is especially keen in his relationships with senior faculty. Their constant judgments of his course work, particularly in seminar or research situations, and their decisions about his doctoral dissertation serve to remind him daily of his dependence on their opinions, goodwill, and so forth. Even when there is confidence in the criteria of judgment and in the responsibility felt by the professors involved, the student still feels great anxiety as he enters these academic relationships. Students often spend as much time debating the political or methodological biases of the professors as they do in more intellectual tasks.

Academic politics, too, may enter into the evaluation process. The views of a student toward, for example, survey methods versus historical orientations in a field like sociology might make a difference in his acceptance by the dominant forces in his department, in his chances for success, and ultimately in his prospects for a job. While most academic decisions are made on the basis of merit, the vagaries of the decision-making process and other variables in the situation cause substantial frustration and strain. And it is not unknown for a graduate student to quit or be forced out of academic programs because of disagreements with professors or general nonconformity unrelated to his intellectual merit.

One of the major complaints of undergraduates has been the

growing bureaucracy and depersonalization of the universities. They complain that they have little contact with faculty members and feel they are only numbers in a computer. Graduate students encounter many of the same conditions, but at the same time they are more directly involved with faculty members. In large graduate departments—some departments at Wisconsin, such as history, English, and mathematics, have five hundred or more students working on advanced degrees—there is little direct contact with senior staff before passing preliminary examinations and sometimes afterward as well. Graduate students must wait in the same interminable lines as undergraduates at registration and they must, at least in the larger departments, meet set requirements in terms of courses and examinations. As a result, many graduate students feel that their academic program is beyond their control and may not be suited to their interests. If bureaucratically set academic requirements are justified at any level in higher education, they are certainly not justified in the case of advanced students.

It is very difficult to separate the roles of graduate student as student and graduate student as employee. This ambiguity and conflict has led to a dramatic mobilization of graduate students in the seventies. At Wisconsin, 59 per cent of the 8,900 graduate students on campus receive some sort of financial aid from the university, and 30 per cent (or almost 3,000 students) are teaching, research, or project assistants; 1,440 have teaching assistant appointments. The problem of student as employee is therefore of critical importance to a large number of graduate students.

The spring, 1970, TAA strike at the University of Wisconsin improved the situation of the teaching assistant, and conditions at Wisconsin are now somewhat better in terms of work hours, evaluation, and other aspects than those at comparable universities. Nevertheless, the basic ambiguity of the teaching assistant's position remains, and it is this situation with which I am concerned here. The student/employee often works for and studies under the same professor, and even with a TAA contract which specifies to some extent working conditions and other matters, the individual teaching assistant must function in this potentially difficult situation. Many teaching assistants have substantial teaching responsibilities and may in fact have more day-to-day contact with undergraduate students than senior professors. They are often highly committed to the university and to academic life (this is particularly true in the traditional arts and sciences departments), but at the same time they are exploited by the university (at Wisconsin, teaching assistants are paid about \$3,600 per academic year for an average twenty-hour work week). They feel a strong conflict between their roles as teachers of and some-

times advisors to undergraduate students and their responsibilities to their academic programs. As a result, many teaching assistants often take longer than the average amount of time to finish their degrees. Teaching assistants are at a particular disadvantage under such new programs as the Ford Foundation's assistance to graduate departments, which stipulates that students must finish their degrees in a set period of time. In addition to receiving fairly low wages for teaching, the teaching assistant often has very little control over what he teaches, the grades given out in his course, and his general working conditions. Yet, it is fairly clear that many large state universities would find it difficult to function without their teaching assistants.

The natural sciences and, to an extent, the social sciences make use of research assistants, almost always graduate students, whose position is also difficult. The student typically works on a research project directed by a professor; his work, however brilliant, is often unrewarded. He is often pressed to write his doctoral dissertation on the basis of his research assistantship and, regardless of whether he is seriously interested in the project, he must often accept. In many departments, research positions are used mainly as a means of financing graduate education, and the work required is minimal or directly related to the interests of the graduate student. However, there are many complaints about the exploitation of research assistants by both professors and departments, and despite the fact that many of the stories are probably exaggerated, there is no doubt a grain of truth in a number of them. The most blatant stories concern "stealing" of research by the senior professors. Some research assistants are overworked by professors or departments. Regardless of the reality of specific instances, students are convinced that they are in a very vulnerable position and that they are likely to be misused by senior academic staff. Reaction to exploitation ranges from resignation ("it's only a temporary situation"), in most cases, to active revolt against the individuals and the academic system that permit these excesses.

Many graduate students have largely good experiences during their careers. Many, particularly at the most prestigious universities, are supported by fellowship funds from the university, the government, or private foundations. Those who have selected a sympathetic professor or a congenial department are not exploited and are able to finish their academic programs with minimum delay and frustration. But the fact remains that there is a great deal of ambiguity, arbitrariness, and injustice in American graduate education. That the system has functioned reasonably well so far is more a tribute to the adaptability of the individuals involved in it, both professors and students, than to its inherent merits.

Graduate students exist not only in an academic milieu but also in the more informal aspects of the university and its community. This is perhaps especially true at universities like Wisconsin, where nine thousand graduate students constitute a large community and subculture of their own, linked to the broader student culture but in many ways separate from it. The graduate student community is extremely difficult to describe since it is so diverse, encompassing both the most avant-garde political and cultural activists and doctoral candidates in educational administration or agriculture with solidly middle-class aspirations. Nevertheless, it is important to devote some attention to this subculture and its patterns of life within the community.

Just as graduate students are often in a difficult, perhaps somewhat unnatural position with regard to their academic status, their situation in society is also somewhat abnormal. Although most graduate students come from middle-class backgrounds, their standard of living is often low, and many fall below the official poverty level. Yet, graduate students are only temporarily poor. They look at the world through the eyes of the middle class, although they have neither its financial resources nor its responsibilities. It may be that graduate students are among the last Americans to observe the Protestant ethic in that they forego income and status now with the expectation that they will earn them later. Without the usual accoutrements of the middle class—home mortgages, car payments, and the like—graduate students are perhaps freer and also more alienated from the American consumer society than are their non-student peers.

A large proportion of their social interactions probably involve other graduate students, especially for those in student housing complexes. Yet, despite the common experiences of graduate students in a large university, they generally have no strong sense of community. Differences in discipline, professional orientation, or background often prevent the emergence of a pervasive subculture. The differences among the kinds of students attracted to such diverse fields as sociology, English, business, or physics are great enough to prevent the emergence of a community.

However, an articulate and highly visible minority of graduate students (largely in the humanities and social sciences) has joined the underground student subculture in the sense that there is an increasing amount of social experimentation, particularly among unmarried students or couples without children. This experimentation, which includes communes and other living arrangements, may have some effect on later social patterns, although this is by no means clear. Graduate students are, in a sense, part of the youth culture, and there is certainly wide-

spread use of marijuana and similar drugs. Nevertheless, many graduate students are too professionally committed, too much a part of an earlier period of campus culture, or too involved with family life to participate fully.

Apparently, however, the differences between graduate and undergraduate students in terms of aspirations, age, and educational situation have been partially overcome in pursuit of common cultural and political goals. The general impact of the counter-culture has probably decreased the professional commitment and goal orientation of many of these graduate students. In part, this group is composed of young men who would not have gone on for advanced degrees if selective service policies had been different. Changes in these policies, combined with a contraction of graduate enrollments in many universities including Wisconsin, changed this situation somewhat. In addition, the popularity of careers in private business has declined, and many young people have gone on for advanced degrees in social work, teaching, or similar service areas. Thus, the graduate student population in Madison has grown substantially (from 4,108 in 1960 to 8,777 in 1970), and its orientation has changed as well. While statistics are unavailable, it is likely that the graduate student population became younger and considerably more radical in the 1960s.

Militant political activism among graduate students is a relatively recent phenomenon. Historically, graduate students have provided much of the intellectual sustenance to activist politics and to radical social thought in the United States. Graduate students, largely in the social sciences and history, were crucial to many of the radical intellectual journals which appeared in the post-World War II period. They were also active in the various intellectually oriented radical sects which survived, although in attenuated form, the McCarthy period of the 1950s. Without ideologically sophisticated graduate students, mostly in the social sciences, it is possible that the radical movement would have ceased to exist at that time.

Radical graduate students also played a key role in laying the foundations for the New Left of the 1960s. They have been especially active in radical journalism: *New University Thought*, founded by graduate students at Chicago, *Studies on the Left*, from Wisconsin, and *Root and Branch*, from Berkeley, emerged at the end of the apathetic fifties and raised many of the issues which became important to the New Left. Perhaps most important, their shift away from the sectarian politics of the earlier period of American radicalism brought many of the accepted notions of radical politics into question. The hold of the Communist Party on the radical movement was broken in part because of the con-

tinuing criticism of the leftist journals. Questions concerning the nature of the cold war, the racial crisis, and other issues were also raised. More recently, *Radical America*, *Viet Report* and its successor *Leviathan*, and a new quarterly, *Socialist Revolution*, reflect the radical but intellectually oriented politics of graduate students and some young faculty.

Radical graduate students helped to make the work of men like C. Wright Mills popular on American campuses in the late 1950s and provided a market for radical social analyses. Through their work as teaching assistants in the social sciences as well as through their political writing, radical graduate students involved themselves in popularizing social protest literature on the campuses. In many cases, older graduate students provided a link between the old left and the new trends in campus activism. A number of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society were graduate students who reflected a synthesis between the radical critiques of the old left and newer styles of social protest and analysis. Significantly, as the student movement has become more militant and disenchanted with more intellectual styles of social protest, fewer graduate students have been involved in it, and the movement's ties to older radicals have weakened.

Wisconsin provides an interesting case study in the relationship of graduate students to the movement at large. During the dark days of the 1950s, the Madison campus was one of few places where a viable radical movement continued to exist. In part due to the civil libertarian stand of the university administration but also because of a small group of radical professors who provided intellectual sustenance to their graduate students, Madison maintained a radical community throughout this period. The last chapter of the Communist Labor Youth League in the mid-1950s, for example, was at the University of Wisconsin. *Studies on the Left*, a key radical intellectual journal, was founded in 1959 by Wisconsin graduate students, mainly disciples of William Appleman Williams in the history department. *Sanity*, a student-run magazine associated with the left wing of the peace movement, operated from Madison in the early 1960s. During this period, political activism was limited to a few hundred on a campus of at least twenty thousand students. And the activism itself was almost exclusively of a moderate sort, focusing on the publication of journals and other educational efforts.

The more recent period has seen a change in the nature of student activism at the University of Wisconsin, as on other campuses. Yet, with some exceptions, graduate students have not been active in large numbers in the more militant activist groups. Some key student leaders have been graduate students, however, and there has been some shift toward more militant politics. The more intellectual strain in Wisconsin radicalism con-

tinues, however, in journals like *Radical America*, edited by Madison graduate students in history, and in various literary and dramatic efforts. The local underground press also flourishes in part with the assistance of graduate students.

The role played by graduate students in campus unrest has been curious and reflects the orientations mentioned earlier. Graduate students, particularly the radical minority among them, are alienated from the social and economic system, and many are well versed in radical theory. They are, however, often hooked into the academic system and many graduate students are unwilling to risk arrest by police or expulsion from the university for their political activities. They often play key tactical and ideological roles in campus crises (although this is probably decreasingly true as protests become more militant and, in the eyes of many older radicals, more irresponsible). Many of the members of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement were graduate students. Similarly, graduate students were active at Columbia, at Harvard in 1969, and in the various Wisconsin struggles of the past few years. In a number of these events, graduate students helped to turn at least some of the attention of the activists to university-related issues.

The organization of the TAA and similar unions is clearly the most important and, to academic administrators, threatening aspect of the new graduate student militancy. At Wisconsin the TAA has been most successful in those departments where conditions are the worst and which, at the same time, enroll the most liberal and radical students. Such departments as English, sociology, and history are among the strongest supporters of the TAA. These departments use large numbers of teaching assistants in their beginning undergraduate courses. They have a rather highly bureaucratized graduate program, and there is relatively little teacher-student contact. It is significant that the TAA has emphasized both its demands for better conditions and more job security for its members and its commitment to student involvement in academic planning and broader reforms. On the basis of this reform program, substantial undergraduate student support was available during the TAA strike in 1970.

The Wisconsin TAA, after a year of rather intensive organization, asked the university administration for recognition as the sole bargaining agent for teaching assistants on campus. Somewhat to the surprise of many observers—and most faculty members—the university agreed to hold a collective bargaining election which the TAA won. During negotiations the TAA presented a series of demands covering such issues as job security, working conditions, academic planning, and some restructuring of decision-making on the department level. After the university

and the TAA bargained without result for almost six months, the TAA called a strike during the 1970 spring semester. The strike lasted almost three weeks and was fairly successful during its initial phases in shutting down classes in the College of Letters and Science. Other parts of the university, such as the schools of engineering and agriculture, were basically unaffected. During the early stages of the strike, which was marked throughout by nonviolence and an impressive amount of self-discipline by the TAA and its undergraduate supporters, the university offered a compromise proposal which made some concessions to TAA demands without accepting most of them. Because the TAA began to lose support for the strike, due to vacations and impending mid-term examinations, it accepted this compromise in the third week of the strike, and this formed the basis of a subsequent contract which was approved by both the TAA and the university. Although both sides only reluctantly agreed to the contract, it marked a dramatic departure from the traditional graduate student-university relationship.

The provisions of the contract include: a three-year guarantee of support for a teaching assistant after his initial appointment; agreement concerning such aspects of working conditions as hours of class time, number of students in sections, and office facilities; and a delineation of those issues open to bargaining, such as disputes over working conditions. The reaction of most university departments has been negative, and it is clear that most faculty members oppose both the contract and the TAA. Nevertheless, the contract is in force and has caused some changes in the tenor of department-student relationships. Many departments have become substantially more bureaucratic in their relations with students and a few have involved students in some levels of decision making. On the surface, the gain for those graduate students holding teaching assistantships has been substantial, although the long-term results are unclear as faculty members solidify their anti-TAA attitudes. Some departments plan to eliminate the teaching assistant system altogether.

The TAA finds itself in a difficult situation. A new contract has not been signed, and many teaching assistants are sceptical of the TAA's power. Some of its support among its own constituency has weakened—and it should be noted that only a little more than half of the teaching assistants held TAA membership when the group was most powerful. The faculty has grown more intransigent as TAA grievance procedures, sometimes concerning small matters, have been used against faculty members. Despite the TAA's problems, the implications of the contract and the existence of a viable, reasonably sophisticated, and successful union of graduate students are not yet fully apparent. The whole concept of unionism in academic relationships is a new one and may well have

wider implications when other segments of the university community, notably the faculty, begin to organize. In addition, TAA action cannot but cause repercussions in the academic relations between the faculty and graduate students. Relationships may become more bureaucratized and formal but this change might be an improvement over the arbitrariness described earlier. It is also likely that graduate students will become more politically conscious on other levels as well. The success of the TAA at the University of Wisconsin is by no means assured, although an important step has been taken. It seems almost inevitable that such organizational efforts will be repeated in other American universities soon and that a major national movement is developing.

The growth of departmental associations at Wisconsin and other institutions is also an important new development on the American campus. Less successful than the TAA, these efforts have produced serious conflicts in some departments, have politicized some graduate students, and have on occasion changed conditions. Most efforts at organizing student groups in academic departments at Wisconsin failed after a short period of initial success in 1969. Divisions in opinion among the students in the departments, unwillingness to take substantial risks, apathy, and tremendous pressure from faculty members proved too much for most. The organizing was confined largely to those departments in which students were most vocal about their dissatisfaction with the state of academic affairs—English, history, sociology, political science were most affected, although others were involved as well.

These efforts at departmental organizing involved some undergraduates but were mainly initiated by graduate students. Despite their lack of any notable long-term success, these attempts indicate that at least some graduate students are willing to involve themselves in department affairs in an effort to obtain a role in decision making and a sense of participation. Although the leadership for some of these associations was in the hands of radical graduate students, most of the demands were related largely to department affairs and had little direct political content. Many departments responded to these pressures not by permitting students a direct role in decision making but by undertaking some reforms in various aspects of academic life. For example, some departments now allow student representatives to attend and speak at departmental faculty meetings. Some have modified preliminary examinations or relaxed foreign language requirements.

While most of the attention of these new organizations has been directed toward the departmental level or in the direction of specific improvements in working conditions for graduate students, there has been some broader activism by graduate students. Student concern for

the general role of the university in American society has become vocal in recent years. The campaigns against ROTC, against the existence of various military-related research facilities, and other links between the universities and the Establishment are examples of this concern. Radical graduate students have provided much of the research which has formed the basis of these campaigns. The role of the university in its immediate community has also become an issue, and this concern has brought about demands for open enrollments, university participation in day care facilities, medical programs, and other community services.

The growing diversity of graduate student political interests is reflected in another recently formed organization, the New University Conference. Founded in 1968 largely by graduate students and younger faculty members associated with the New Left, the NUC has chapters in most major universities and reflects a sophisticated version of New Left politics. The NUC sees the university as an agent of the American "ruling class" and as a basically counterrevolutionary institution. Attacks on the university, by students or militant faculty members, are therefore justified. The NUC's major demands involve the disengagement of the university from the power structures of American society, although support has been given to various programs for academic reform as well. The basic thrust of the NUC, which calls itself an organization of socialist graduate students and younger faculty, has been primarily political. It has tried, usually without success, to defend younger faculty members fired from academic posts for political reasons.

The NUC at Wisconsin has been notably unsuccessful in organizing a viable group. In part because of its super-militant rhetoric and its aloofness from "reformist" campus issues, the NUC has been able to attract only highly committed radicals who are alienated from the academic system. It has had almost no success among younger faculty members. The NUC has been more successful in other universities, where it has been able to build an organization concerned with broader issues while retaining its radical perspective. The NUC indicates another trend on the campus, and it has served as a kind of alumni organization for ex-SDS members. Given effective organization and a somewhat broader approach, the NUC might become a more important force on campus.

The politics of graduate students have developed in both scope and militancy in the past several years. Although there are still some important distinctions between the movement and the political activism characteristic of graduate students, the expansion of the student movement has substantially affected the graduate schools.

Successful graduate students become young faculty members, and although their salaries jump, young faculty retain many of the values

and opinions and work under some of the same pressures they had as graduate students. At many universities there is also a fairly close relationship between at least some advanced graduate students and some younger faculty members. Thus, it is important to consider the junior faculty in any discussion of graduate students. The new militancy of graduate students and their skills in political organization will probably have an effect on faculty members in the near future in terms of opposition to academic administrations, organization of faculty unions, and general anti-Establishment activity.

It has been said that today's younger faculty are a new breed. In the more prestigious universities, there is a grain of truth to that statement, although the small amount of research available indicates that while younger faculty may be somewhat more liberal than their older colleagues, they generally accept the norms and values of the universities. A small group, however, does constitute a new breed, and these individuals are often important in the academic equation. Many were involved in activism as students and are profoundly critical of many aspects of the multiversity. Many consciously reject the traditional academic norms of research and publication and thus have very little in common with their senior colleagues. They are, indeed, a threat to the entrenched values of academe.

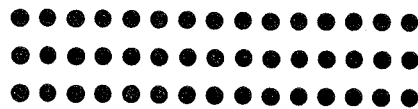
Young faculty members in major universities are not in an enviable position. Their salaries, while better than in years past, are not high, and they are under tremendous pressure to publish while at the same time preparing courses and seminars. Expecting after the completion of the Ph.D. to enter the community of scholars and be relieved of some of the pressures they felt as graduate students, the younger faculty must instead submit to great pressure to "make it" in the academic system of the large universities. They are encouraged to be loyal to their departments but at the same time do not usually have much power in academic decision making.

It is not surprising that many younger faculty members are critical of various aspects of the university and do not feel themselves truly a part of the institutions in which they teach. This state of affairs, of course, greatly increases the likelihood that young, nontenured faculty members will play some dissident role on the campus. The fact that a number of younger faculty members, particularly in the social sciences, are radical in their political views is also important. This means that students, particularly graduate students, will be exposed to radical positions on various issues by their professors. Even when radicals on the faculty do not approve of a particular demonstration or sit-in, they generally take a radical position and in this sense legitimate the viewpoint.

It is also true that younger faculty members are often able to communicate effectively with students, generally tend to be more aware of trends among students, and are therefore a crucial element in any crisis situation.

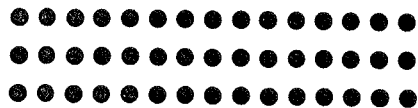
It is difficult to predict the future for Wisconsin or other universities. The fiscal crisis in education has most dramatically affected the graduate schools. And while many graduate students are alienated from middle-class society and from academe in a period of cutbacks, it is by no means clear in what direction alienation will move them. For the first time, however, they have organized an articulate organization and have taken a major interest in academic affairs. Faculty members, under pressure from many sides, have often listened and in a few instances have responded constructively. Within a generally pessimistic situation lies the possibility of change.

CHAPTER 15



UNIONS ON CAMPUS

Steven Zorn



There are at least two ways to look at a university. One is to see it as an intellectually oriented institution, a place where knowledge is pursued for its own sake and where the best of culture is transmitted from one generation to another. The other is to see it as an institution performing a set of functions that contribute to the maintenance of the overall stability of society—functions like the advancement of technology through research, the supplying of trained personnel for the economy, and the provision of extended child-care facilities to avoid overcrowding in the labor market. Along with the first of these two views goes a set of attitudes generally recognized as “professionalism,” or academic freedom, the idea that university staff members are in fact functioning as free, independent professionals, limited only by their own concepts of service to their clients (students) and by the collective judgment of their peers (colleagues in their discipline). Along with the second goes a set of attitudes that would be equally appropriate in any other large institutional or industrial setting—the idea of a distinction between workers and managers, the acceptance on the part of workers of collective action as a valid means of dealing with problems.

There can be little doubt that the situation at most large Ameri-

can universities conforms more closely to the second model. Leading college administrators have described the multiversity as essentially a service institution, providing certain functions that the society needs.¹ The real customers of the university are not the students who pass through the classrooms, but rather the industries and government agencies for whom the university produces both research findings and trained, certified, skilled personnel. In this sense, the university is a basic industry, part of the infrastructure of the American economy, as basic and necessary as a transportation network or a dependable supply of energy.

If one accepts the view of the university as industry, it is not difficult to understand why, in the past few years, many of those within the industry have begun to question the traditional view of the university as a place for disinterested scholarly inquiry. Both workers and students have questioned the adequacy of the professionalist, academic ethic. One result of this questioning has been the emergence, at Wisconsin and elsewhere, of new labor unions, involving teaching assistants and, in some cases, untenured faculty. Some of these unions have restricted their activities to seeking redistribution of some of the material benefits available within the higher education industry; others have raised more basic questions about the nature of the university itself, and have sought not only to gain more benefits for their members, but also to limit the degree to which the customers—government and industry—can control the production process. The following essay attempts to describe briefly the condition of one of those groups of campus workers—teaching assistants—and to discuss the process by which collective action by those workers, in the form of labor-union activity, came about.

Problems Faced by Teaching Assistants

As college enrollments increased rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, an increasing share of the teaching that was required came to be done by teaching assistants. For example, between 1953 and 1965, total U.S. undergraduate enrollment increased by 154 per cent.² During the same period, the number of faculty members with the rank of instructor or above increased by 102 per cent, while the number of junior staff, primarily teaching assistants, increased by 145 per cent, from 27,000 to 65,000. Teaching assistants have been concentrated at relatively few institutions—the same institutions that most clearly demonstrate the industry-like aspects of higher education. In 1963, for example, 87 per cent of all teaching assistants were in large universities³ employing 100 or more TAs. In that same year, the number of TAs in large publicly-supported institutions averaged nearly 450.

In the early 1950s, assistantships represented almost half of all graduate student support; by the mid-sixties the influx of scientific research funds into the universities had made teaching-assistant appointments considerably less prized. In natural sciences, appointments declined from 40 to 32 per cent of the total graduate stipends between 1953 and 1965. Similar declines occurred in other academic areas—even in the humanities.⁴ While the dollar value of teaching assistantships often matched or even exceeded research and fellowship stipends, the work required for the money was considerably more taxing and often produced a major delay in academic progress. The median work load, according to a U.S. Office of Education survey in 1965, was more than twenty hours per week, with over 20 per cent of all TAs working more than thirty hours per week.⁵ The assistant's work on his own studies is not included in these figures. Work as a teaching assistant (particularly if the graduate student is at all concerned with doing something more than showing up in the classroom on time and merely running through the syllabus material) has been shown to have a direct impact on the length of time needed to earn the Ph.D.⁶ Given these problems and the widespread recognition of the modern university's industrial nature, it is not surprising that at least some teaching assistants have begun to meet the inadequacies of their job situation through collective action. The direction in which that collective action leads can perhaps best be seen by looking in some detail at the situation of the teaching assistants at Wisconsin, as their condition is roughly comparable to that of assistants at other large public universities.

The teaching-assistant work force at Wisconsin grew from 624 in 1955 to 1170 in 1965 and to 1650 by 1969. Although the university administration repeatedly cited statistics showing Wisconsin assistants to be among the highest paid in the Big Ten, these statistics were misleading. Much of the "salary" included by the university in its widely publicized \$5500 figure consisted of the out-of-state tuition remission granted to all teaching assistants; and, in fact, to most graduate students. Admittedly a fringe benefit of sorts to students from out of state, the remission certainly could not be considered part of the earnings of a teaching assistant who was a Wisconsin resident. Also, the \$5500 publicity figure was based on an assumed work load of one-half time. In fact, the average assistant worked one-third time or less and so received a gross salary of approximately \$2500 per year, out of which he still had to return the five-hundred-dollar in-state tuition charge.

Working conditions were little better. In many departments, teaching assistants were forced to share desk and office space with far more of their fellows than the facilities could comfortably accommodate;

in the speech department, for example, sixty assistants were assigned to an office with desk space for fifteen. While some science departments provided substantial desk space and office supplies not only for their teaching assistants, but for all sponsored graduate students, other departments, particularly in the humanities, offered only the most minimal and inconvenient working conditions. Office supplies (for example, stencils and paper for preparing course materials) were often unavailable; there were few facilities for private consultation with students. In general, assistants recognized a vast disparity between the conditions under which they worked and those enjoyed by the full-time faculty.

The lack of any fair, available, and impartial grievance procedures was another major element in the dissatisfaction of Wisconsin teaching assistants. Prior to 1968, an assistant with any sort of complaint about overwork, unfair treatment of himself or of undergraduates by the faculty member in charge of his course, or dismissal (or "failure to renew" his appointment) had only informal, random access to departmental administrators, with no authoritative channels for resolving his grievance. With the adoption of Faculty Document 10D in 1968, the administration attempted to provide the appearance, if not the substance, of a grievance procedure by setting up a system for hearing complaints, leading ultimately to decision by a faculty tribunal. Predictably, teaching assistants saw this as little improvement over the existing informal procedures, since in either event the final judge remained the faculty.

Although administration and faculty discussion (as, for example, in the catalogue descriptions of teaching assistantships) stressed the role of the assistant as an apprentice teacher, in fact TAs were given relatively little guidance in conducting their classes or in general questions of how to teach. The faculty's own committee to study the teaching assistant system in 1967-1968 found that at least 40 per cent received no help at all from their departments in preparing for teaching. In many other departments, the help that was provided consisted of no more than one afternoon of discussion at the beginning of the fall term. This lack was seen as a particularly severe handicap by assistants in departments such as mathematics or English where the teaching assistant was the sole instructor for a class, not merely a discussion leader in a lecture course.

Finally, many assistants resented their lack of voice in educational policy decisions at the course and department levels. In many courses, the syllabus was determined by committees of senior faculty, few of whom had any contact with students actually enrolled in the course. Even in areas like English composition, where there was little reason for a rigid syllabus, since one course does not lead into another in the same

way, perhaps, that introductory language or math courses do, the assistants who actually taught the sections had no freedom. And the broader concept that became the Teaching Assistants Association "educational planning" proposal—namely, that course planning should be a cooperative effort, involving both students and teachers in the decision-making process—was unheard of.

One possible response to these conditions is for the individual assistant, or perhaps a small group of teaching assistants, to take ad hoc action responding to a particular situation rather than working for structural changes in the system as a whole. For example, an assistant might protest to the faculty member responsible for the course and that may end the issue. Another tactic that appeared at Wisconsin and at numerous other schools in the early and mid-sixties was the emergence of departmental graduate student groups to act on particular problems, like mobilizing support for demonstrations against Dow Chemical recruiters in 1967 or supporting the demands made by black students in 1969. These department organizations also acted on matters of concern only to their own members—for example, the reform of preliminary exam requirements for Ph.D. candidates, department financial aid policies, and so on. In only one or two cases, however, were the organizations able to survive in any meaningful sense between periods of crisis; at the university-wide level, and in almost all departments, there was no continuing presence, no counterforce to that of the administration.

Much of the general dissatisfaction over educational issues has been channeled into educational reform movements. At virtually every large university in the country there has been, in the past decade, a profusion of student-faculty committees to deal with virtually every aspect of higher education. By this time, it should be unnecessary to document in detail the relative lack of success achieved by these efforts—that is, success measured as substantive changes in curriculum content, or in a shift of decision-making power.⁷ Certainly at Wisconsin, despite many student-assistant-faculty committees, there has been only a very slow change in the most irksome aspects of the educational program—the heavy load of degree requirements for undergraduates and the relatively rigid and inflexible course syllabuses. Beyond the lack of substantive change, there has been, as the sharp faculty response to the possibility of student and teaching assistant involvement in course planning has shown, no fundamental change in the desire of those who presently control those aspects of the industry to share that control. While educational reform efforts are likely to continue, the Wisconsin experience certainly indicates that, to date, they have been more a device for cooptation of students and

teaching assistants and for providing the appearance of change rather than for securing its reality.

A third possible response to unsatisfactory conditions has been the formation of unions devoted primarily to bread and butter issues. This pattern was followed at Berkeley, where the teaching assistants' union that arose from the Free Speech Movement demonstrations of 1964–1965 rapidly became very like a traditional labor union, concerned primarily with wages, hours, and working conditions (the last taken in the narrow sense of physical work surroundings, grievance procedures, and so on). Since its formation, the Berkeley union has limited its activities largely to such matters as criteria for appointment of assistants, standardization of work loads among departments, and installation of such amenities as telephones and typewriters in teaching assistant offices. One analysis of the Berkeley situation has concluded that the continued control of the union by the bread and butter faction demonstrates the essentially professional orientation of a majority of assistants, or the concern for acquiring what they see to be the proper perquisites of their quasifaculty status within the existing educational system, rather than producing major changes in the overall nature of that system.⁸

From the point of view of those who have been active in the Wisconsin TAA, this concern for economic and status issues is likely, as in the case of Berkeley and similarly oriented unions at City University of New York and elsewhere, to make the initial organizing task relatively easy because large numbers of assistants will probably willingly act collectively for economic benefits without engaging in the long and often agonizing process of working out a position on more political issues. However, in the end, bread and butter issues may fail to produce significant changes in the allocation of power within the multiversity.

The fourth potential model for response to the unsatisfactory situation of teaching assistants at the large universities is the one taken by the TAA. This model involves at least four distinct elements: a concern for economic issues; a focus on questions of control, or the allocation of decision-making authority; a concern for the interrelation between specific teaching-assistant issues and broader political issues within the higher education industry; and, finally, a concentration on questions of internal union democracy and power-sharing.

The TAA approach to bread and butter issues is that economic benefits are something to be won from the employer, simply because the employer has the funds available to pay for them and because the benefits are those any worker feels entitled to. For example, the union's economic demands concentrated on such areas of major expense as health insurance, job security, and higher work loads (with correspond-

ing pay increases). Although the union has made extensive analyses of the inadequacies of physical work surroundings, these issues were, for the most part, less important to the TAA membership than the large economic package. The status conferred by more office space and more telephones, while an issue for some assistants in bargaining at the department level, has not been the focus of attention. A possible exception was the insistence of TAA departmental units on the elimination of some faculty perquisites (for example, elevator keys), but this demand was in the context of a concerted attack on faculty power per se; they were not trying to gain faculty status for teaching assistants. (In the case of the elevator keys, the TAA affiliate demanded that all elevators be open to the public—students as well as assistants and faculty.)

The second focus of TAA action has been on a sharing of power within the university. Much of the membership support for the educational planning proposal, for instance, has been phrased as a desire to win a more democratic means of making decisions, of determining course and curriculum content with the participation of students and teaching assistants as well as faculty. Power sharing, a central theme in TAA propaganda, has raised the possibility of community/worker control of the industry as a serious long-range program and has posited a number of models of how such control might work. For example, a TAA leaflet on possibilities of unionism for research workers includes the following proposal:

The university should establish a committee to review research grants. The committee would represent faculty, research assistants, specialists, and community groups such as labor unions and conservation groups. Business interests would not be included, since industry is already well represented through its grants and its influence in government. The committee would require reports from all researchers concerning the possible social impact of their work; these reports would be open to public inspection and rebuttal.

Similarly, a TAA leaflet proposing new contract demands in the educational planning area states: "Until we come to terms with the power structure of the university and challenge its definition of community control—that is, control by the departmental administrators, by the tenured faculty, by the state education bureaucrats—the community of teachers and students will not be able to exercise any meaningful control over education."

Control, or power, then, is recognized as the real issue. Among a substantial proportion of the union membership at least, this ultimate goal is, in fact, the chief focus of union activity, and some short-term gains (like telephones and office space) may be, and have in fact been,

sacrificed in order to pursue the establishment of the union as a visible alternative center of power and a reminder that other arrangements for the allocation of decision-making authority are possible.

The union's third broad area of concern has been to make both union members and others in the industry aware of the more general political lessons that can be drawn from the particular situation of teaching assistants. The union has, for example, repeatedly raised questions about university discrimination against women, not only against women as assistants, but also in admissions policies and in faculty hiring and tenure decisions. Similarly, the union has been willing to cooperate with groups seeking open admissions policies, even though such policies might bear only a tangential relation to the day-to-day teaching situation of the average assistant. Finally, union members have been among the more active on campus in explicitly political activity—in protests against the war and against the use of police and troops on campus, for example. In contrast to the distinction that may exist at Berkeley between economic and political issues, much of the active TAA membership tends to see key issues as containing both components and to make links between the particular economic difficulties that the industry imposes on teaching assistants and the broader political questions of how power is wielded within the industry and how that power is related to other basic political issues in the society as a whole.

The TAA's fourth focus has been on questions of internal union structure and democracy. Large portions of membership meetings have been spent in criticism of actions that the TAA executive board took without specific membership approval and in discussions of the potential dangers of the charismatic leadership that has seemed at times to be emerging within the union. The TAA constitution, requiring advance notice to all members of matters to be acted on at membership meetings and giving the executive board no independence in policy matters, is among the most democratic of any American union. In addition, the by now well-established membership distrust of the leadership, while at times creating delays, has the advantage of making it more likely that, when the union does act, most members will understand the bases of that action, since they will have debated it themselves at membership meetings and in departmental discussions. For a large proportion of union activists, the democratic union is seen as a first step toward a more democratic society at large.

Brief History of the TAA

The TAA has not come to these positions quickly or easily. In fact, the history of the union shows a number of swings from political to

educational to industrial-economic emphases, leading up to the present transient synthesis. The TAA first arose from a series of meetings held by Wisconsin teaching assistants in May 1966; assistants were concerned with campus protests against the draft and, in particular, with their desire not to be put in the position of sending students into the army by giving them poor grades. Following these meetings, which were primarily forums for airing complaints, essentially the same group of somewhat less than fifty assistants began meeting to discuss such issues as pay differentials between departments and hiring and firing practices. Despite the group's relatively small membership, the university administration quickly moved to coopt its leadership, requesting the group to elect a member to a faculty committee then studying the teaching assistant situation and seeking its advice—though not giving it a decision-making role—in some matters affecting assistants.

A new kind of action began in February 1967 when the TAA took up the case of an assistant who had not been rehired, despite promises by her department. The success of the TAA in winning her job back led to further grievance actions and to the development of a demand for a standard university-wide contract, involving the individual assistant, the union, and the university as parties. The proposed contract would have replaced the largely informal and arbitrary hiring and firing practices then in effect. When it became apparent, however, that the university administration was not ready to grant the formal recognition that such a contractual arrangement implied and that the TAA was not yet in a position to demonstrate the support of a large enough number of teaching assistants to compel recognition from the university, the organization decided to concentrate its efforts on handling grievance cases and publicizing the unfair and arbitrary nature of university action in each case in order to create awareness of the job situation. At this same time, in the fall of 1967, the TAA also rejected the advisory role that had been offered by the administration, instructing its representative on the faculty committee to resign because he was not allowed by the committee to make public the information he received as a member.

In October 1967 more than four hundred teaching assistants met to respond to the university's calling out of club-wielding police to disperse an anti-Dow demonstration on campus. Most of the assistants, acting through the TAA, supported a student-led strike and called off their classes until the students ended their own action. But the incident did not immediately generate a large, continuing organization. The Dow demonstration did create the opportunity, however, for further use of the TAA's grievance procedure. In pursuing the cases of assistants fired or not rehired because of political activity, the TAA was able to

make arbitrary action by management a real issue for more campus workers.

Despite this growing awareness, most assistants still saw themselves as preprofessionals, or junior faculty. What agitation existed at the department level through 1968 was concerned primarily with educational issues—reform of course syllabuses, participation in department curriculum committees, and so on. In early 1969, however, the TAA began to transform itself from a minority faction, concerned primarily with educational reform issues, to a majority labor union, concerned with economic, educational, and control, or power, issues. The immediate impetus for this change was a legislative proposal to cut the out-of-state tuition remission for teaching assistants. The union leadership publicly announced a strike vote of all assistants—a tactic designed to put pressure directly on the legislature.

The running of a strike vote led to planning not just for a one-shot strike but for a full-scale organizational drive designed to secure recognition for the TAA as exclusive bargaining agent for all teaching assistants on campus. Within a month, more than half of all assistants on campus had signed cards authorizing the TAA to act as their exclusive collective bargaining agent. At this point, the union publicly sought recognition from the administration. After six weeks of negotiations, the administration agreed to a set of ground rules by which the TAA could be recognized as bargaining agent following a state-supervised representation election.

At the time of the election—won by the TAA, with more than 77 per cent of the vote—many teaching assistants assumed that the university was interested in good-faith bargaining and that there would soon be a signed UW-TAA contract. In fact, the bargaining process was considerably more drawn out. First, the union itself went through a long period—virtually the entire summer—during which it developed contract demands based on a series of discussions in the departments and then among department representatives. While many of the bread and butter issues were relatively easy for the union to deal with (few assistants had any reservations about asking for long-term job security, better health care, or adequate working conditions) much time was needed to work out the union's position on the control issues, such as educational planning. Not until late in the summer was there substantial agreement within the union on this clause and then only on a formula that left the details of sharing power over courses and curriculum to be worked out at the department level. Second, the administration bargaining team quickly showed that it was not interested in serious, productive negotiations. The early bargaining sessions repeatedly bogged down over minor issues. For

example, one entire day of bargaining was spent considering the university's objections to a union proposal that only union members be allowed to remove material from union bulletin boards. Similar episodes continued throughout the fall. Because of the administration's use of stalling tactics, the union membership voted on January 8, 1970, to suspend its participation in campuswide talks until the university responded with positive new proposals. The suspension lasted for two months and ended with the strike vote.

At this point there were seven key issues still unresolved. Most important to the TAA membership was the question of educational planning—the sharing of control over grades, course content, and requirements among students, teaching assistants, and faculty. In addition, the university and the TAA were far apart on the issues of minimum stipends, class-size maximums, health care coverage for assistants and their families, the structure of a grievance procedure, the length of time for which an assistant would have job security, and the question of whether the university could continue to maintain and act on secret files relating to teaching assistants.

On March 8, more than two-thirds of the union's total membership voted to strike; in addition, most undergraduates honored the union's picket lines. Class attendance in the College of Letters and Science dropped to 20 per cent of enrollment. Local teamster members also honored the picket lines; campus bus service was halted, and deliveries of supplies were interrupted. These successes, though, were at least partially matched by increased pressure from the university. Mass firing of the strikers was threatened, and the administration secured an injunction against the strike. In addition, although the administration had earlier offered an educational planning clause granting some power to teaching assistants but not to students, the interest of the faculty in preserving its power in this area became apparent. Numerous faculty members made public statements threatening to resign if the university gave in at all on educational planning (one departmental faculty sent its statement to the chancellor written on asbestos, to show the strength of their determination to keep control).

While these counterpressures did not convince many assistants to return to work, it gradually became evident that the strike had reached a stalemate; the union's effect on normal operations—especially ongoing research activities—was not severe enough to cause the university to agree to the TAA demands, but the university was disrupted enough so that some concessions were made to effect a settlement. The resulting contract, accepted by the TAA membership April 8, made virtually no concessions on the educational planning issue. It did, however, set up an

impartial grievance procedure, give teaching assistants a guarantee of long-term appointments, and improve working conditions to some degree. While the failures of the contract were well recognized within the TAA, most members believed that the strike had at least established the union as a more or less permanent alternative source of power on the campus.

Developments since the strike have, however, raised questions about that belief. The university attempted to fire more than forty assistants who had participated in the strike, despite a no reprisal clause in the contract. Almost immediately after signing the contract, the administration attempted to renege on the health-care provisions. The same stalling tactics that had been used in the campus-wide bargaining appeared in departmental negotiations over local issues. Finally, the university revealed plans for an attempt to decertify the TAA as bargaining agent. Although the fall 1970 membership drive showed that the union had sufficient strength to withstand these challenges, and although the grievance procedure was successful in rebuffing most administration attempts to avoid contractual responsibilities, the evidence was clear that the union had not been accepted as a permanent center of power within the university community.

Analysis and Prediction

There are several lessons to be drawn from the TAA experience. First, organizational strength is increased by a linking of economic and political goals. Second, even relatively strong organizations, like the TAA, need some breaks, some missteps by management, if they are to succeed. And third, there is evidence that, even among such a relatively elite group as teaching assistants, a spirit of antiprofessionalism is increasing.

The overall strength of the TAA was built on both the economic goals that ended up as the bread and butter demands in the union's contract proposal and on the political goals of decentralized power, manifested in the educational planning proposal. Although, in the course of the bargaining and the strike, many TAA members began to identify with both issues, it was the presence of both issues within the union that made it possible in the first place to attract a large membership.

As is the case with most successful campus activist movements, the TAA was aided considerably by the mistakes of its opponents. The initial spur to a mass organizing campaign, for example, came from the legislative proposal to cut teaching assistant salaries. Organizing also was helped by numerous documented instances of disciplinary action or firings for obviously political reasons. Comparison of the relative ineffectiveness of the TAA while Robben Fleming, a skilled labor mediator, was chancellor with its growth during the recent regimes of less adept

administrators gives some indication of the degree to which administrative blunders can at least speed the pace of activity for groups like the TAA.

Finally, the strike showed that many assistants had crossed a kind of attitudinal threshold and were no longer willing to see themselves solely as apprentices in a professional caste system. Even during the strike there was development in this direction; in the first days, picketing assistants rarely said anything to faculty crossing the picket lines but by the last week of the strike, few faculty members crossed without being the target of verbal abuse, even from their own graduate students. While this developing antiprofessionalism is by no means the dominant attitude, even among Wisconsin assistants, it presages a growing alienation and militance even among the most faculty-like portions of the student community.

If the above trends are real—and the Wisconsin experience, at least, suggests that they are—where will organizations like the TAA move in the future? At this point, one can identify at least three possible developments: first, an expansion of the scope of demands being made by unions representing teaching assistants and other campus workers; second, a broadening of union activity to include other kinds of workers; and third, the attempt to build links between campus unions and other segments of organized labor.

The TAA's own experience indicates that initial contracts are only a first step; in subsequent negotiations, the demands made by union members will be greater. In the case of the TAA, demands are being increased on both the economic and political fronts. Economically, the next set of contract proposals will call for vastly expanded health-care provisions, greater minimum stipends, and better physical facilities in which to work. Combining both the political and economic aspects of the union will be a proposal for university-sponsored day care for the children of assistants; this is aimed both at easing a real financial hardship and at raising the possibility that women will be considered as equals when hiring decisions are made. The political demands will probably center on new versions of educational planning and on some kind of open-enrollment program.

At the same time that the union is expanding the scope of its demands for assistants it is also taking some initiatives in organizing other campus workers, particularly those falling outside the blue-collar civil-service categories that are represented at Wisconsin and at many other large public universities by AFL-CIO unions. For example, research workers, non-civil-service technicians, and undergraduate workers

in the cafeterias and libraries have all been involved in discussions about forming unions or joining with the TAA.

The increased union activity on campus has already produced new interest in university organizing on the part of several established unions. The AFL-CIO American Federation of Teachers has expanded its college organizing staff and has attempted to induce teaching assistants' unions at several Big Ten schools to join it. The teamsters are organizing faculty at some state colleges. And the recent National Labor Relations Board decision extending bargaining rights at private colleges and universities has made the field even more attractive to established labor. To date, most of the new unions on campus have not joined any established unions. This is not to say that some links do not exist; the Wisconsin strike depended heavily on teamster support, for example. Pressure from the larger unions for affiliation will increase as campus unionism becomes more widespread. From the point of view of university administrators, the established national unions may be easier to deal with; it is unlikely, for example, that an AFT local would place the same emphasis on political demands that the TAA or similar new unions at other schools do. The fact that many TAA members see the university as an industry does not mean that they view traditional American unionism as an adequate means for effecting change. On the contrary, TAA activists contend that both political and economic demands must be raised to challenge the power of *any* industry. If the new campus unions maintain their political emphasis, they may be unlikely to affiliate with well-established, large national unions.

In summary, then, the experience of the TAA at Wisconsin reflects the increasingly industrialized setting in which members of the university community find themselves and the political consciousness common to many activist movements on campuses in the past decade. If the new unionism on campus is to have any lasting impact, it will be because unions like the TAA are able—and at this point it is impossible to say if they will continue to be able—to maintain the connection between the political and the economic in the minds of their memberships, and so create a larger force for change than either a bread and butter union or a campus political action group could create alone.

Notes

¹ C. Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

² U.S. Office of Education, *Graduate Teaching Assistants in American Universities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 16.

³ U.S. Office of Education, p. 17.

⁴ U.S. Office of Education, p. 24.

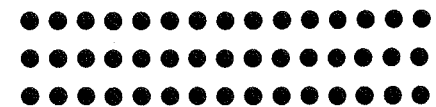
⁵ U.S. Office of Education, p. 27.

⁶ K. W. Wilson, *Of Time and the Doctorate: Report of an Inquiry into the Duration of Doctoral Study* (Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 1965), p. 47.

⁷ C. Muscatine, *Education at Berkeley* (Berkeley: University of California, 1966), p. 184.

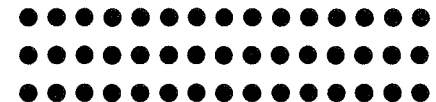
⁸ R. Dubin and F. Beisse, "The Assistant: Academic Subaltern," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1969, 11, 544.

CHAPTER 16



BLACK STUDENT POWER

Judith Lyons, Morgan Lyons



The University of Wisconsin has long played a leading role in the ongoing drama of student protests. Kenneth Keniston mentions Wisconsin as one of three major state universities which, by combining a reputation for academic excellence and freedom with highly selective admission policies, tends to congregate large numbers of potentially protesting students.¹ In February 1969, this potential erupted, and national attention was focused on the Madison campus when a massive student strike followed the presentation of thirteen Black Demands to the university administration by black students and their white allies. This chapter is a descriptive case study of the strike and demonstrations mounted in support of those demands, and concentrates on campus reactions to both specific incidents of student activism and the general issues behind them.²

At the most elementary level, we are concerned with obtaining accurate information as to the magnitude of student protest in order to assess its impact on colleges and on the nation. For example, the difference between estimates of a tiny and a substantial minority of dissenters represents an important indicator of the power potential of activists. Similarly, data on the proportion of students that easily can be, or has been, mobilized on a given issue suggests recruitment potential that may